

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8244
INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN
AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 14013

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, ECON, PINR, PINS, PINT, NI
SUBJECT: POLITICAL/ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA

REF: (A) STATE 2&4631; (B) STATE 302418

1. IN ORDER TO MEET REFTEL B'S DECEMBER 15 DEADLINE, FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF DECEMBER 6 ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE, ATTENDED BY COUNTRY TEAM, AF/W DIRECTOR SMITH, AND IBADAN AND KADUNA CONSULS AND BPAO'S. CONFERENCE COVERED TRENDS IN US/NIGERIAN RELATIONS, DOMESTIC NIGERIAN POLITICS, NIGERIAN ECONOMIC SITUATION, AND PROBLEMS ON HORIZON. FULL ASSESSMENT REPORT WILL BE CABLED SOONEST.

A. BILATERAL RELATIONS HAVE IMPROVED, BUT DEEP-SEATED NIGERIAN SUSPICIONS OF US MOTIVES WILL CONTINUE CAUSE PROBLEMS FROM TIME TO TIME. CONTINUING HIGH-LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE WITH FMG WOULD HAVE HELPFUL, CONSTRUCTIVE EFFECT.

B. NIGERIAN EXPECTATIONS ABOUT NEWIUS ADMINISTRATION ARE ENTHUSIASTIC, TO THE POINT OF RISKING DISAPPOINTMENT.

C. SMC REMAINS FACTION-RIDDEN WITH DECISION-MAKING AN AD HOC PROCESS. MILITARY COULD FACE SERIOUS CIVILIAN UNREST IF INFLATION IS NOT BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL, OR IF POPULACE PERCEIVES SLOWDOWN IN RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE. CORRUPTION IS AGAIN FEEDING ON IT-SELF. DEMOBILIZATION REMAINS POTENTIALLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE. NORTH-SOUTH DIVISIONS CONTINUE TO EXIST, HIGHLIGHTED BY UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS CONTROVERSY. AMBITIOUS POLITICIANS COULD
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EXPLOIT ANY OF THESE ISSUES TO THEIR SHORT-TERM PERSONAL ADVANTAGE

BUT TO DETRIMENT OF NATIONAL STABILITY.

D. ON OTHER HAND, EMIRS APPEAR REASONABLY SATISFIED THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS HAVE NOT SERIOUSLY ERODED THEIR POWERS. FMG'S IMAGE AS PROBLEM-SOLVING, CORRECTIVE REGIME, CARRYING ON IN SPIRIT OF NATIONAL HERO MURTALA MUHAMMED, IS FACTOR FOR STABILITY, AS IS ELITE'S STAKE IN CURRENT SYSTEM.

E. FMG MUUT BORROW TO CARRY OUT DEVELOPMENT PLANS, SHOULD BE GOOD EXIM CUSTOMER. FINDING SKILLED PEOPLE TO GET DEVELOPMENT MOVING REMAINS MAJOR FMG PROBLEM. US PRIVATE AGENCIES AND USG MAY BE ABLE TO ASSIST ALTHOUGH NIGERIAN SALARY SCALES ARE INADEQUATE TO ATTRACT SIZABLE COMPONENT OF EXPERIENCED AMERICAN SPECIALISTS. SHORT TERM PROSPECTS FOR COUNTRY-FINANCED TECHNICAL COOPERATION ARE UNCERTAIN BUT WILL CGKXCE TO B EXYZORED BY EMBASSY STAFF. COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR US FIRMS SHOULD CONTINUE TO GROW, ALTHOUGH EXEMPTIONS TO INDIGENIZATION REGULATIONS ARE UNLIKELY. EASUM

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